Title: Worker, Businessman, Entrepreneur?: Kenya's Shifting Labouring Subject

Authors:

Corresponding Author: Catherine Dolan, Department of Anthropology, SOAS, University of London, Russell Square, London WC1 OXG. cd17@soas.ac.uk. https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3939-6607

Claire Gordon, Social Life, 12a Peacock Yard, Iliffe Street, London SE17 3LH. claire.gordon@social-life.co

Acknowledgements:

The authors thank Karin Eli and Dinah Rajak for their constructive comments on an earlier draft.

Word Count: 11, 971 (inclusive of endnotes and references)

Worker, Businessman, Entrepreneur?: Kenya's Shifting Labouring Subject

Abstract

Entrepreneurship is increasingly promoted as a salve for the political problem of jobless growth and shrinking state coffers. But, its contemporary position at the frontiers of African capitalism is premised on nearly a century of attention on the African 'economic man', figured and reconfigured through efforts of governments and international development institutions. This paper traces a genealogy of this labouring subject in Kenya, describing the ideological, discursive and material practices undertaken to mould African workers into productive economic agents. Across colonial and post-colonial periods, and within different employment contexts, the purported African habitus has been construed as an obstacle to progress, one that can be surmounted through the acquisition of enterprising qualities and entrepreneurial dispositions. Steeped in an ideal of selfhood as individualistic, industrious and future-oriented, the productive economic man has come to represent a set of ideas about the future of the nation, and is deeply entwined with moral valuations of Kenya's citizenry and with idioms of development and economic growth. The paper details how the productive and enterprising subject is continually invoked as a response to shifting economic and political dynamics, and invested with a perennial capacity to reinvigorate the nation.

Introduction

Africa's economies appear to be emerging anew from the long durée of structural adjustment, heralding the transformative possibilities of fantastical urban cityscapes, savvy tech entrepreneurs, and commercial dynamism. Africa, we've been told, has risen (The

Economist 2011), a conversion driven in part by globally circulating models of economic inclusion, which claim a universal ideal of the entrepreneur as catalyst of new economies of development. The disciplining of labour that marked the 20^{th} century has been supplanted by national visions of an enterprise economy, premised not on a nation of wage labourers, but of incubators, accelerators and business process outsourcing. From Luanda and Lagos, to Johannesburg and Nairobi, we find the entrepreneur, whether petty trader, businessperson, app developer, or start-up guru, serving as host for broader ideas about progress, modernity, and economic development.

Hailed as the future of business, and increasingly of development policy, entrepreneurship[1] has been reconfigured as the new (improved) employment, an ideological salve for the political problem of jobless growth and shrinking state coffers. But, its contemporary position at the frontiers of African capitalism is premised on nearly a century of attention to the African labouring subject, figured and reconfigured through the colonial and post-colonial eras in a drive to construct a rational, enterprising 'economic man'[2] (Hood 1997) as both a means to and an emblem of cultural and political-economic 'progress.'

This paper[3] tracks efforts by colonial and post-independence governments in Kenya, as well as international development institutions, to supress the ostensibly collectivist and 'underproductive' African habitus,[4] and to craft, through a set of discursive techniques and corporeal practices,[5] an enterprising and efficient 'economic man' conditioned to fuel capitalism through different forms of market engagement (Hood 1997). Adopting a Foucaultian concept of discourse as a form of power/knowledge that constitutes subjects (Foucault, 2000), this paper traces the rationalities, strategies, technologies, and techniques that have been marshalled in the production of 'economic man'. This subject entails a changing ideal of selfhood, one that is male,[6] industrious and future-oriented, centred on individuals and nuclear families rather than communities,[7] and tethered to the values of accumulation and consumption.

The paper begins in early 20th century Kenya, when the administration of the East African Protectorate declared the African habitus an obstacle to economic development and the African subject in need of improvement, their presumed ‘idleness’ and inefficiency a pressing colonial concern. Inducements to work ensued, including a host of ordinances, and later, the inculcation of new dispositions: a work ethic premised on industrial time discipline, improved labour output, and future thinking, and a reorientation toward long-term urban settlement in nuclear families. Thus, the permanent wage labourer, reoriented towards a non-communal life, was socialized to embody the qualities of the ‘right kind’ of African worker (Cooper 1992).

The paper then turns to Kenya’s post-Independence period, when government efforts to deliver much-anticipated socio-economic benefits to a newly independent populace constellated around the role African enterprise could play in building a prosperous future. The ‘native’s’[8] enterprising activities such as hawking and street trading, discounted by the colonial regime as a brake on modernity, were revisioned as a palliative for the surfeit of labour and Kenya’s informal sector was rebranded as a space of dynamism and creativity integral to the country’s economic future. Yet despite the initial optimism surrounding post-colonial entrepreneurs, concerns regarding their productivity and efficiency remained. The international development community feared enterprise was hamstrung by a corrupt state, and that informal workers lacked savvy in the ways of capitalist enterprise and its requisite market dispositions. By the 1990s, as structural adjustment policies hollowed out the

Kenyan economy and opportunities for employment became scarce, a 'new generation of African entrepreneurs' (NGAEs) (McDade and Spring 2005: 17), hailing not from Nairobi's hand-to-mouth economy but from the 'missing middle', became championed as the object of Kenya's modernist hopes and expectations.

Following the turn of the millennium, the spirit of entrepreneurialism advanced by the NGAE extended into new realms and actors. With mass joblessness and rapid urbanisation, and an expanding population of precarious youth threatening civil unrest, national and international development efforts began to focus on incorporating Kenya's youth into networks of global capitalism through entrepreneurial activities. In particular, informal settlements, the target of market-oriented logics and discourses, were recast as pools of 'natural' assets – resourcefulness, ingenuity, opportunism and socially embedded webs of economic exchange – to be parlayed into job creation and economic renewal. Echoing earlier framings of African labour as 'idle', 'underproductive' and 'undisciplined', the transformation from jobless youth to entrepreneur entailed enculturation into the idealized neoliberal subject, individually responsibilised for economic transformation.

Across these periods, we see how Africans are constituted as labouring subjects through processes Foucault terms 'modes of objectification' (Foucault 1982: 777), from the way disciplinary technologies construct the colonial labouring subject as an object of control and enact dividing practices to segregate and categorise labour, to how entrepreneurs constitute themselves as enterprising subjects in the post-millennial period. These processes reflect different modalities of power and governmental rationalities, as seen in the shift from efforts to cultivate, rehabilitate, and discipline Africa subjects under colonial liberalism, to the neoliberal regime centred on the production of self-regulating entrepreneurs, who will maximize their human capital (Foucault 2007). But, across time and space these governmental rationalities entail 'the construction of specific ways for people to be' (Du Gay 1996: 54) in economic relations, their potentialities fostered and co-opted for societal transformation. In particular, the UK Colonial Office, the colonial and post-independence governments in Kenya, and the international development community shared a common purpose: to convert the African 'non-economic man' (Cohen 1971, p. 210), anathema to progress and stability, into *homo economicus* of the market economy, a rational, self-maximizing individual whose actions would bring Kenya more predictably into the fold of global capitalism (Williams 1999). Their efforts thus reveal 'endoconsistency' (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 19): a shared understanding that an underproductive and inefficient African labourer impeded the attainment of economic development and progress, and that future prosperity depended on reconstituting the African labouring habitus through bodily and psychological dispositions that aligned with regnant economic paradigms. As the paper highlights, the figure of the economic man, shaped to embody attitudes, norms, conduct and corporeal practices of efficiency and self-reliance, would possess the subjectivity upon which the hopes and expectations of the nation's colonial and post-colonial economies would rest.

Colonialism: The Problem of African Labor

Concerns with the African 'labouring habitus' were articulated in Kenya as early as the turn of the twentieth century, when the newly established East Africa Protectorate required a large supply of cheap African labour to build roads and railways, and work on settler farms. The labour-exporting reserves of central Kenya, where Africans were resettled so that large tracts of agricultural land could be allocated to settler production (Melnick 2018), were harnessed to the project of empire building through a set of parasitic policies that governed what sorts of work Africans performed and for whom. When Africans refused to submit to the dictates of settlers, the colonial administration introduced Hut and Poll Taxes, pass laws, and forced labour, all of which were partially designed to compel work 'from the natives who were unused to the benefits and obligations of continuous labor' (cited by Okia 2012: 42; italics mine; see also Clayton and Savage 1974). Further 'inducements' followed. In 1910 the Native Hut and Poll Tax Ordinance extended the 1901 tax regulation, exacting taxes from each adult male who did not own a hut (Waris 2007). Despite these measures, control of African labour proved elusive; some Africans did not pay tax, refusing to sell cattle or work for Europeans, while others preferred to use income from selling surplus produce to pay taxes rather than serve as wage labourers for Europeans (Lind Holmes 1980). Describing the frustration this situation evoked, one settler commented:

> . . . it is grossly unfair to invite a settler to this country . . . to give him land under conditions which force him to work and at the same time to do away with the very foundation on which the whole of his enterprise is based, namely cheap labour, whilst the Native is allowed to retain large tracts of land on which he can remain in idleness (East African Standard, 30 November 1907 cited by Lind Holmes 1980: 28).

Such statements conveyed a moral crisis that extended beyond the economic need for labouring bodies. The presumed 'idleness' of Africans was the subject of searing colonial commentaries that cast it as a threat to economic development and moral rectitude. Conway Belfield, governor of Kenya between 1912 and 1917, noted in his address to the Legislative Council, ‘I am prepared to state definitely that we desire to make of the native a useful citizen, and that we consider the best means of doing so is to induce him to work for a period of his life for the European’ (cited by Buell 1928: 332). When Sir Edward Northey became Governor of the Protectorate in 1919, he reinforced this position, arguing that the viability of the Protectorate hinged on the profligacy of estate production, which could only be achieved by encouraging ‘the thousands of able bodied natives to work with the European settler for the cultivation of the land and improvement of stock’ (Minutes of the Legislative Council, 24 February 1919, C.O. 544/6). The government would not allow Africans to remain ‘in uneducated and unproductive idleness’ (Clayton and Savage 1974:110) and the infamous Northey Circulars on labour recruitment encouraged District Commissioners to identify strategies, short of force, to induce ‘idle’ (male) Africans out of the reserves to work on European farms (Spencer 1974). In organising and controlling the movement of Africans in this way, the colonial administration not only aimed to increase the number of labourers, but to forge a distinction between productive and unproductive forms of circulation and movement (Foucault 2007: 18), a ‘dividing practice’ (Foucualt 1982) that relegated African males to a spatially, socially and economically distinct category that could be governed. While relocating Africans to European farms was seen to curtail their indolence, ungoverned mobility was forcefully proscribed, the *kipande* ensuring Africans remained tethered to spatially fixed zones.

During the inter-war years, with the colony reliant almost exclusively on agricultural exports, a spate of further legislation aimed to harness ostensibly ‘idle’ African labour (Lind

Holmes 1980: 37). The Resident Natives Ordinance and the Native Registration Ordinance, enacted in 1918 and 1919 respectively, introduced measures to secure and control labour as part of the broader 'civilising mission' in Kenya (Ogot 1974: 267). As Zelaza describes, such measures were understood as 'an act of benevolence, a necessary "shock therapy" for people deeply mired in idleness and indolence' (Zelaza 1992: 173). Though official policy prohibited forced labour on European farms and government projects, an amendment to the Native Authority Ordinance, introduced by the government in 1920, rendered Africans liable to perform compulsory labour on government works for up to 60 days/ year if they could not demonstrate they were either fully employed, or had been continually employed for 3 months in the previous year (The Official Gazette 1921: 925). Compulsory labour and the requirement that chiefs mobilize it, was justified by Britain's civilisational and moral imperative to wrest African subjects from their presumably self-destructive actions (Melnick 2018). As Colonial Secretary, Lord Milner, claimed:

> The difficulty in this question of native labour is to steer a middle course between allowing the natives to live in idleness and vice and using improper means to get them to work and permitting them to be employed on unfair terms or to be improperly cared for . . . Labour must be forthcoming if the country is to be developed as it should be. The country needs it and the native is better for it (Parliamentary Debate, 14 July 1920, cited by Lind Holmes 1980: 45).

Yet, as concerns grew that efforts toward compulsory labour were heavy-handed, the British pinned the fulfillment of the colony's labour needs on professional recruiters, whose services expanded considerably in the post WWI period (Ocobock 2017). Combing the reserves for young Africans who would be sent to labour camps and subsequently to private employers, recruiters became key intermediaries in the construction of economic man, complicit in constituting and governing 'productive' African workers and facilitating the state's capacity to 'conduct the conduct' of men during colonial rule (Foucault 2002: 341).

Though the economic reformation of the 'native' largely pivoted on appropriating wage labour for plantations and factories, it concomitantly entailed suppressing the otherwise 'enterprising' activities of Africans such as selling European commodities or independently cultivating and selling cash crops, seen to inhibit the progress toward national 'advancement' (Melnick 2018).[9] Nonetheless, by the 1930s, the effects of the global recession had upturned the labour situation with the supply of African labour exceeding demand, resulting in a discursive and policy shift toward the quality of African labour and the self-transformation this required. The presumed inefficiency and lacklustre performance of African male workers became the colony's most pressing concern, as well as the focus of employers' disciplinary gaze.

Colonial Developmentalism

By the late 1930s, putative links between the rise in rural-to-urban labour migration and social breakdown gave way to anxieties over perceived delinquency and unrest among African labour. Colonial authorities began to fear the impact of 'detribalisation' – the severing of ties between male migrant labour and their families in the reserves. Though settlement in the reserves allowed colonial officials/industry to benefit from low wages, as women ensured social reproduction and cultural stability, anxieties that the conscription of male labour would unravel the social and moral fabric of rural communities and erode tribal stability (Spencer 1974) surfaced palpably in the 1930s and 1940s. Marking a departure from the self-interested economic man conceived by Adam Smith (1976) and John Stuart Mill (1967), the administration feared that modernisation, and especially a wage economy driven by migrant labour, was encouraging African individualism (Throup 1987) and a dereliction of duty towards kin and community (Colonial Office 1948). As Cooper (1996:52), citing a Quaker missionary noted, labour 'migration disrupted the one strong asset Africans had—the "integrated solidarity and mutual dependence" of their communities.' Furthermore, as White (1990) describes, colonial officials were concerned that the loneliness of urban migrant labourers, detached from wife and family, would create a feral underclass vulnerable to militant activities, concerns that peaked in the wake of the 1939 Mombasa Dock Strike. Taming a 'truculent working class became' imperative to realising 'orderly progress' in the colony (Cooper 1989: 746).

Entwined in these questions of labour and unrest was an increasingly interventionist approach guiding British colonial policy during and after WWII (Lewis 2000), in which disciplinary control over labour was interwoven with forms of pastoral care that aimed to enhance workers' well-being.[10] In 1940 the UK government passed the Colonial Development and Welfare Act, marking the first allocation of resources from the metropole directed towards raising the living standards of colonial peoples through social and economic development.[11] Marking a shift away from the extractivist arms-length approach espoused under indirect rule (Cooper 2002), a new phase in so-called enlightened imperialism commenced (Lewis 2000). The new ethos of colonial developmentalism held that the maturing of colonial nations could be accelerated through metropolitan solutions: the incorporation of the same institutions, principles and structures that characterised British national life. Transposed onto the same evolutionary track as the colonial powers, East Africa's problems were now conceived not as somehow unique and intrinsic to Africa but as similar to those which faced the industrial world (Cooper 2002: 8). Maintaining a productive labour force would therefore require basic sanitary conditions, alongside proper nutrition and rudimentary health care; interventions in the physical and intimate conditions of life which resembled the state-led welfarism and public health initiatives of the metropole. Wages too became the subject of scrutiny and investigation, with the interventionist state eventually setting minimum wage levels within certain sectors (Cooper 1989). The efficiency and productivity of African labour thus became a problem of development, one that could be tackled by establishing standards of worker welfare that would ensure the economic and social stability of Africans (Cooper 1987). While the turn to welfare embodied the pastoral elements of colonial power, such efforts were arguably less concerned with the well being of Africans than with producing an able-bodied '[h]omo economicus to fuel the market economy' (Kalpagam 2000: 420).

Shaping the African Worker

Despite efforts to link economic development to welfarist interventions, the productivity of the native worker continued to be a 'dominant problem' in East Africa (Orde-Browne 1946: 15), one deemed to stem as much from African culture as from labour conditions. The 1947 African Labour Efficiency Survey, conducted with 6000 workers on the Kenya-

Uganda Railway, linked the problem of efficiency directly to ‘the native’, portrayed as innately unsuited to discipline, averse to labour, and indifferent to wages (Northcott 1949: 26). Yet, convinced that the colonial state could overcome this deficit through tutelage in ‘correct’ dispositions, Northcott, executor of the survey, and his team identified a strategy to cultivate a sense of drive and efficiency among East African labourers. Their first step was to understand the mentality, ways of working and motivations of native labourers. ‘We must necessarily begin with the individual’, the survey detailed, ‘he must be understood as the product of a specific tribal culture in which he has been created and by which his habits and attitudes, his feelings and customs have been shaped…. He cannot be known without knowledge of his life on the Reserves’ (Northcott 1949: 78). Those working with native labourers were thus encouraged to become acquainted with customary activities on the reserve, as a means to reform their workers.

Second, Northcott’s survey focused on techniques through which to cultivate subjects with the skills, knowledge and habits needed to propel the colonial economy forward (Hood 1997). According to the survey, training was the primary tool for developing effective workers; this training, the survey stated, should be ‘direct, detailed and “right on the spot’’’ and ‘by reason of the native’s mentality, to be repeated again and again’ (Northcott 1949: 120). Reflecting broader Euro-American racial discourses of the era (Blanton 2000), repetition and emulation were the pedagogical methods considered most suitable for native workers whose capacity for abstract analysis was deemed wanting. According to Major Orde Brown, a Labor Advisor to the Colonial Office, in-situ training was to be complemented by encouraging students to take up ‘a practical aim in life’ (Orde-Browne 1946: 25): a vocational orientation to mitigate the risks of aspirations raised by universal education. Indeed, colonial authorities feared that schooling was ‘a snare rather than a benefit’ (ibid: 26), instilling ‘ideas that worked against the discipline and control of the workforce’ and engendering unrest and criminality among the youthful population, with educated, aspirational subjects posing a threat of resistance against the colonial regime (Hood 1997: 1986). Efforts to inculcate European values were thus circumscribed by the need to sustain colonial hierarchies; the development of racial- or class-consciousness was to be avoided (Desai 2001, Cooper 1992).

Time, too, was deemed central to the problem of labour, with African’s slow ‘progress’ and failure to ‘keep *up* with time’ a source of colonial anxiety (Nanni 2012: 90). Time signified broader moral values, demarcating clear boundaries the idle and industrious, the aimless and goal-oriented, the improvident and disciplined (Dolan and Rajak 2018). Like Weber’s ascetic Protestantism, in which the productive use of time gave direction and purpose to individual action, adherence to time regimes was cast as the channel to becoming a useful, reliable employee (Weber 2011). Yet while colonial officials perceived punctuality, or deference to clock time, as essential to productive labour, these markers of the workday were considered arbitrary by some African workers, who did not share in the settlers’ prescribed rhythms of productivity. The African Labour Efficiency Survey posited that although workers had largely understood the relationship of time to wages, the correlation between time and output proved harder to construct; workers were seen to lack the correct tempo of labour, working slowly and haphazardly (Northcott 1949: 59). However, rather than rely on threats of dismissal or the rough discipline of the foreman, the survey suggested improving workers’ motivation through, for example, displaying individual output on wall charts that would appeal to workers’ (presumed) enjoyment of competition, a precursor to the pedagogical techniques deployed to shape the conduct of the neoliberal enterprising subject (du Gay 1996). .

In addition to day-to-day time discipline, the wider temporal horizons of native workers were an object of concern, even as the colonial period edged to its close. The colonial regime depicted local Africans as living irredeemably in the moment, lacking the capacity for future planning that characterizes the so-called rational activities of the economic man. ‘To plant in order to harvest is normally the furthest limit of foresight and providence’ explained the 1956 Inter-African Labour Institute (IALI) report, ‘discipline and organisation do not exist except as a spontaneous collective reaction to the rhythm imposed by the seasons’ (IALI 1956:35). Although work rhythms had already been altered by the earlier development of plantation slavery along the coast (Cooper 1992), colonial discourses constructed African smallholders as inhabiting the same timeless present of the early anthropological subject (Fabian 1983), with the agricultural calendar’s cyclical rhythm foreclosing the progressive temporal horizons wage labour required.

Crucially, progressive time was underpinned by open-ended aspirations for accumulation, which contrasted with the finite goals of ‘target-workers’ who sought to earn a pre-defined amount to pay for a specific object, such as taxes or a dowry. These workers could not be induced to keep labouring once their target had been reached: a sating of desires that unsettled the dynamics of capitalist production. For colonial authorities, stimulating a desire for consumer goods (Hood 19997) and inculcating ‘correct’ spending habits was closely bound with cultivating the African economic man; as the African Labour Efficiency Survey stated: ‘there remains the most difficult lesson of all for the African, that of learning to appraise money and to use it’ (Northcott 1949: 8).[12]

Suitability for labour implied acquiring not only the disciplines of production but consumption too, presaging the much-lauded emancipatory potential of markets under austerity and neoliberalism.

Stabilisation: Making a Working Class Habitus

In 1953 the Kenyan government created the Carpenter Committee to investigate wage and productivity levels. Its conclusions drew a pointed contrast with previous decades, positing that 'traditional' cultural structures stymied efficiency and individual accumulation. Like the East Africa Royal Commission (1953-1955), which undertook an investigation of factors conducive to economic development in the region,[13] the Carpenter Committee concluded that progress was rooted in the 'human factor' (Hood 1997: ii). Improving performance would require removing the African 'from the enervating and retarding influence of his economic and cultural background' (Kenya 1954: 3), which were impediments to 'industry, efficiency and increased output' (IALI 1956:11). Indeed, while racialised notions of innate inferiority and laziness had gradually receded in imperial state discourses, 'traditional' customs and social structure were cast as fettering native workers to inefficiency, with the security of kin and community obviating ambition, self-reliance and the incentive to work (Jones 1960). Even the customs governing hospitality were believed to dampen the demand for wage work, acting as 'insurance premium for the future' (ibid: 54). Yet the much-maligned influence of culture could be overcome, the Carpenter Committee proclaimed: extricating the workforce from tribal influences and cultural constraints would shape Africans anew, with positive ramifications for labour productivity (Kenya 1954).

Hence, in the colonial state's final decade, a policy of labour stabilisation gained increased traction as a strategy to avert the perceived threat of 'bodies out of place' (Melnick 2018: 67). Labour stabilisation, which called for the permanent settlement of workers near their employment, contrasted with the pre-Second World War preference for migratory and flexible flows of workers, 'part-time proletarians' (Smart 2011:63) who retained connections to native reserves, the sites of ethnicity, custom and solidarity. Where unaccompanied migrants had previously dominated employment in Nairobi and Mombasa, the state restyled its vision of the African labourer as a man living permanently in the city with his nuclear family, retrained and reoriented towards a non-communal life (Kenya 1954: 95). Stabilisation was a breeding ground for this new industrial lifestyle, grounded in the nuclear family, schooling, and the stability of wage labour. To sever ties to the traditional social and economic structures of kin and tribe, municipal housing was developed to allow nuclear family units to settle together (Walmsley 1957), and wages were reconceptualised as a family provision (Kenya 1954), thereby re-casting kinship units through middle-class British norms. Thus, to ensure productivity, the regime not only sought to govern and control labour through the reorganisation of space (see Foucault 1991), but to ensure that the local population shared in the fundamental values of the settlers – not only as related to waged labour, but also, and more crucially, as related to self and family: the units upon which a valuation of waged labour was premised.

Post-Independence

During the first decade of independence, the Kenyan state turned its attention to a new economic man—the smallholder farmer—who would catalyse national development by rejuvenating underproductive landholdings and improving export performance. In contrast to the colonial state, the newly installed Kenyatta government offered producers a means of production, successfully transferring thousands of hectares of highly productive land from colonial estates to African ownership through the Swynnerton Plan, which transformed 'peasant' farming into an entrepreneurial endeavor by opening up new opportunities for the cultivation of cash crops such as tea, coffee, and hybrid maize (Legovini 2002, O'Brien and Ryan 1999). Amidst a buoyant post-independence economy, the farmer-cum entrepreneur was idealised as a risk-taking, forward-looking pragmatist at the heart of nationalist aspirations.

During the late 1970s, however, Kenya's international position as a postcolonial success story foundered. A series of economic shocks — the boom/bust cycle of coffee and tea prices in 1976-79, the dismantling of the unity (EAC) in 1977, and the second oil shock of 1979 — dampened the nation's economic performance and handicapped the capacity of the state to sustain post-independence growth and prosperity (O'Brien and Ryan 1999). The labour market underwent a reversal of conditions: from excess demand to an excess supply of labour. The state faced a new employment problem, rooted in the structural changes of rapid population growth and swelling urban migration, alongside aspirations borne of education (Callaway 1963); the desire for betterment and progress was chafing against the realities of what the state could deliver.

With a large reservoir of unemployed labourers, the Kenyan government had to render productive an ever-increasing labour supply. Though state efforts focused primarily on the agricultural sector, the discovery of 'an adequate reserve of men who have the judgment, the initiative, the courage and the determination to conceive and launch new enterprises' also became central to realising the state's aspirations for economic development (Berkoff 1974: vii). The native enterprising activity largely supressed by colonial regimes was now subject to keen interest among the Kenyan government[14] and international development agencies, which perceived small-scale enterprise as a would-be remedy for both labour oversupply and the frustrated aspirations of an educated, unemployed generation.

Hiding in Plain Sight: The Discovery of African Enterprise

In 1972 an International Labour Organisation (ILO)/ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) mission convened in Nairobi to discus the employment problems facing Kenya. The mission was part of the ILO's World Employment Programme, which brought employment generation into the centre of national planning in the Global South (Bangasser 2000). Though several recommendations targeted the agricultural sector, the mission also heralded the discovery of vast reserves of economic potential in the unregulated activity of the 'informal sector' (ILO 1972; see also Hart 1973). The term, chosen to avoid the binary of 'traditional' and 'modern', sought to redress the bias against the productive activities of the poor.[15] No longer relegated to the 'unemployed or those underemployed in petty trade, primitive crafts, begging and other low productivity activities' (Harbison 1967:191), the informal economy was recast as a dynamic force, characterised by labour-intensive production and low barriers to entry: a sponge to absorb the growing ranks of the unemployed. Rather than a vestige of an incomplete modernisation, the informal economy was restyled as pivotal to Kenya's future, a reservoir of growth that could stem rising rates of poverty and unemployment (Potts 2007).

Yet, optimism surrounding the ‘discovery’ of entrepreneurs in the nation’s smallholdings (‘enterprising peasants’ [Tiffen 1976]) and towns (‘hawkers’ and ‘businessmen’ [Dinwiddy 1974]) was soon tempered. These entrepreneurs were not, according to many of their international development chroniclers (Garlick 1971, Hoseltiz 1964, Dinwiddy 1974), the innovative, disruptive entrepreneurs described by Schumpeter[16] as pillars of economic development. Like their colonial predecessors, post-colonial commentators depicted African enterprises as constrained by culture and tradition, arguing that kinship militated against investment and enterprise growth, with businessmen diverting profits and capital to provide for their extended families (Garlick 1971).

Once again, the problems of African enterprise were deemed to start with ‘the characteristics of African businessmen themselves – particularly with their motivation, their social environment, their individual capacity and experience, and their collective reputation’ (Dinwiddy 1974: 6). While African business owners saw access to credit or finance as the central limiting factors to their enterprises, national and international agencies downplayed these difficulties, instead focusing on entrepreneurs’ presumably underdeveloped market dispositions, a narrative that persists in contemporary models of small-scale entrepreneurship (Dolan and Rajak 2016). A lack of personal financial discipline, claimed Dinwiddy (1974), an officer with the UK Foreign Commonwealth Office, hindered entrepreneurs, whose reputation for financial irresponsibility and late payment of debts was equated with a failure to invest, plan and ensure the growth of enterprises (Volker 1997). Previous doubts as to the managerial capacity of native workers also carried through to assessments of African entrepreneurs, whose reluctance to delegate or form partnerships was framed as impeding growth (Dinwiddy 1974). Furthermore, becoming ‘successful’ entrepreneurs would require a temporal transition: rejecting the fulfilment of rewards in the here-and-now, for goal-oriented, future thinking. As with the construction of the colonial labourer, the transition into entrepreneurship demanded that individuals move beyond day-to-day business planning into the wider sphere of economic action, marked by prudent production and consumption (Dolan and Rajak 2016).

Reflecting both a personal and a circumstantial failing, the problem of the entrepreneur was also the problem of the African workforce, as development practitioners and policy makers construed both the labourer and the entrepreneur as insufficiently steeped in capitalist culture to enact the productive roles assigned to them: ‘The African entrepreneur is likely to have to recruit his labourers from a pool of manpower in which industrial culture is as yet only faintly known and appreciated’, explained Hoselitz (1964: 103), leading to high supervision costs due to insufficient training and workers’ limited attention spans. At the same time, the Kenya state was also decried for its putative anti-capitalist mentality and viewed by European and American development institutions as an obstacle to entrepreneurship (ILO 1972). Inefficient, bureaucratic, enmeshed in the corruption of kin and tribe, the indigenised government was part of the problem (Dinwiddy 1974). An entrepreneurial culture would therefore require a new ‘enabling environment’ for unfettered capitalism: deregulation and privatisation, the central economic and political strategy of neoliberalism (Read 2009).

Saviours of Development: The Modern African Entrepreneur

As the 1980s opened, Kenya’s economic situation, like much of Africa, soured considerably. The economic shocks of the late 1970s were compounded by mounting fiscal deficits, deteriorating international terms of trade, and rising levels of poverty (Legovini 2002). With publication of the World Bank's influential Berg Report in 1981, Kenya joined the ranks of African states whose perceived inefficiencies were subjected to a radical mix of market liberalisation, fiscal pruning, and public-sector privatisation, the three pillars of the so-called 'Washington Consensus' (Goldman 2004). In 1980, Kenya was among the first countries to receive an adjustment loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), activating a regime of fiscal discipline and market rationality that would regulate the institutions of state, economy and family for subsequent decades (O'Brien and Ryan 1999).

During the 1980s and 1990s, fast-growing enterprise and its corollary figure – the 'modern' entrepreneur (Marsden 1990)– came to be seen as the source of economic growth, prosperity and employment opportunities. Dovetailing with the ascendancy of neoliberal enterprise culture in the US and UK, a new form of 'homo oeconomicus' emerged: the entrepreneurial self (Foucault 2008: 226.), beneficiaries not of the state but of their own enterprising selves. Entrepreneurs were cast as 'pioneers of development', their protagonism extending beyond the economic realm into social development: transforming lives, improving the environment, bringing health and welfare to their communities and countries (ibid.). If the informal economy was a salve for unemployment, the entrepreneurs of the middle, i.e. those 'lying between the informal sector on the one hand and large foreign- or state- owned enterprises on the other', offered potential for growth; they were to be the 'true engine' of industrialisation that could 'help alleviate poverty and advance social progress' (ibid.: 6, 13). While some development policy makers declared the entrepreneur of the middle 'missing' (World Bank 1989, Ferrand 1996). Marsden

(1990: 5), an economist with the World Bank, claimed that 'the middle is not missing'; Kenya had several thousand 'modern African entrepreneurs', with many waiting to join their ranks and realize their entrepreneurial dreams.

The 'modern' African entrepreneur became part of what McDade and Spring (2005: 17) term, 'the New Generation of African Entrepreneurs' (NGAEs), self-consciously modern business people who organised regional enterprise networks, and received funding from international agencies such as United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the European-based Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). In the early 1990s, regional enterprise networks began to emerge in West, East and Southern Africa, seeking to grow markets for African businesses beyond national borders through new investment opportunities and forms of private sector regional co-operation (ibid.).

Representing an entrepreneurial vanguard in East Africa, the NGAEs juxtaposed themselves against the *African* mode of business. Their modernity rehearsed the dichotomy of a 'backwards' continent, their practices seen as distinct from those of traditional African businessmen. The NGAEs were said to hire based on merit, not kinship; to apply cutting-edge personnel management techniques, rather than apprenticeship or tutelage. Instead of diversifying, the NGAEs focused on growing their businesses, expanding through credit rather than savings as they took calculated risks. In contrast with the corruption often associated with African enterprises and their inter-mingling of family and business, the NGAEs preached and practiced transparency, employing auditors, accountants and other *modern* business practices. A sense of optimism also distinguished NGAEs from their less dynamic peers; where entrepreneurial zeal was often stifled by poor infrastructure, political instability, and corruption, the NGAEs viewed such ‘crises not as hopeless, but as fertile ground for business opportunities’ (ibid:26). For the ‘modern’ African entrepreneurs, success relied on their own agency, confidence and a can-do attitude, a faith in their individual capacities to deliver a promising future.

Possessed of a complete set of entrepreneurial virtues, ‘modern African entrepreneurs’ were, as Marsden describes, no different from entrepreneurs elsewhere in the world’ (Marsden 1990: 22), an archetype that transcended place, culture and ethnicity. Endowed with entrepreneurial wherewithal, they did not need the ‘paternalistic’ programmes directed at colonial labourers or development’s micro-entrepreneurs. Rather, they required business-enabling environments, encouraging the further retreat of the state through deregulation and tax reduction, as well as access to credit and markets (ibid; see also the World Bank’s annual *Doing Business Reports*, initiated in 2004 to measure the regulations that enhance and curtain business worldwide).

Enterprising Culture: Everyone is an Entrepreneur

While led by NGAEs, the spirit of entrepreneurialism was not confined to their milieu. As Nelson and Johnson (1997) detail, another response to the failings of small enterprises to grow in Kenya was the ambition to inculcate enterprising virtues and values through education. According to the 1988 Presidential Working Party on Education and Manpower Training for the Next Decade and Beyond, the development of an ‘enterprise culture’ necessitated integrating business, technology, self-employment, and entrepreneurship into education and training programs (ibid.). In 1990, with UNDP funding and the support of the ILO, students in Kenya’s technical training institutions were required to complete 154 hours of entrepreneurship education.[17] Developing the correct attributes and disciplines of self-employment, that is, an entrepreneurial subjectivity, was twinned with an attempt to redirect aspirations towards self-employment as a desirable career path, constructing precarious micro-entrepreneurship as a vocation like any other. Entrepreneurial education thus extends a new form of governmentality, one that tethers the newly fashioned subjectivities of students to the rationality of the market (Dahlstedt and Hertzberg 2012).

Moreover, the entrepreneur was to be ‘a role model in the community, a provider of employment opportunities for others, a stabilizing factor in society, and a primary contributor to the development of natural and human resources’ within the nation; the central protagonist of social and economic development (ibid.:11-12). Thus, while the inculcation of the neoliberal entrepreneurial subjectivity was considered central to becoming successful entrepreneurs, the reverse was also true: entrepreneurship education was a way of instilling and transmitting a neoliberal sensibility among Kenyan citizens.

The Millennial Entrepreneur

At the turn of the millennium, Kenya was again beset by economic malaise, crippled by rising oil prices, negative economic growth and high rates of unemployment (Sawai 2002). At the same time, like many African nations, Kenya was experiencing a ‘youth bulge’, with 75 percent of the nation’s population under the age of 30 (Samuel Hall 2017). Given a hollowed-out job market devoid of employment possibilities, youth did not deliver the much-feted demographic dividend such statistics foretold. Instead, with few opportunities for formal employment, a skills deficit, and devalued currency of diplomas and accreditations, youth faced a collision between aspiration and opportunity, their ensuing disillusionment seen to foment crime and violence (Hope 2012). Like the detribalised and itinerant workers of the late-colonial period, idle, unemployed,[18] frustrated youth were portrayed as a threat to the state, their disaffection a harbinger of radicalisation (Dolan and Rajak 2018).

Within this context, the quest for 'inclusive markets' that incorporate Africa's youth has become a key focus of national development,[19] with entrepreneurship, enterprise and innovation among both men and women, touted as a prophylactic against the scourge of 'idleness' and crime.[20] As Higgins notes, 'The most solid conclusion that can be made is that while formal employment is important to promote, the realities of Kenya's economy demand that youth are better prepared to become their own informal innovators' (Higgins 2013). Put another way, in an economy decimated by years of ruthless structural adjustment and neoliberal reforms, youth were seen as their own best bet for economic betterment.

As market subjects, however, youth required reformation. Mirroring colonial efforts to instil character, discipline, and professional skills among youth detained at Wamumu camp for boys chronicled by Ocobock (2017), remaking millennial youth entailed a confluence of moral rehabilitation and market preparedness. Since the turn of the millennium, Kenya has launched a pro entrepreneurial policy environment, in which youth figure centrally. In 2005, the government created the Ministry of State for Youth Affairs[21] to address youth concerns, and in 2006 developed Kenya's first National Youth Policy and the 'Youth Enterprise Development Fund' (YEDF) (Hope 2012). In 2017, the Ministry of Information, Communication and Technology began training youth across the country on how to find and register for online work, under the assumption that online jobs would help to abate rising youth unemployment, while providing a cheap labour source for companies (Korir 2017). But undoubtedly the most spectacular paean to entrepreneurship lies in Kenya's Vision 2030, the country's long-term blueprint for development that seeks to transform Kenya into a newly industrialising, middle-income country by 2030. Praised for uniting the nation behind a common vision of progress (Correspondent 2018), its execution rests on what the Secretariat deems the entrepreneurial 'spirit of Vision 2030; hard work, innovation and personal discipline' (Kibati 2013). Central to this vision is Kenya's aim to leverage and enhance the nation's flourishing technology sector to spin a future that moves beyond agriculture and manufacturing. These entrepreneurial ambitions are rooted in a new techno-optimism, a belief that harnessing the power of science and technology will deliver a progressive national future, witnessed in Nairobi's moniker, 'Silicon Savannah' (Smith 2012). A lynchpin in this new 'world class environment' of commercial dynamism and technological progress is Konza City, a proposed, 'smart' techno-utopia of technology hubs, skyscrapers, luxury malls, and stadiums situated 60 kilometres south-east from Nairobi (Johari 2015). Expected to emerge as the largest technology city in Sub Saharan Africa, Konza aspires to inhabit the same urban entrepreneurial aesthetic as Singapore and Dubai, a sanitised vision of modernity where savvy tech entrepreneurs stroll tree lined boulevards in crisp, immaculately clean business suits. Importantly, Konza is not reserved for the high-tech entrepreneurs who populate the start-ups, incubators, and accelerators in Nairobi's 'platform economy', but aims to unlock possibilities for enterprising youth who 'are getting choked up in the informal sector' but 'have education and entrepreneurial minds to tap into endless opportunities that come with a technological city' (The Standard 2016). Aspiring to serve as a sponge for Kenya's legions of unemployed graduates, Konza's strategic plan includes a standard toolkit of entrepreneurial formation, including innovation events (e.g. expos, awards programs, youth camps, etc.), an investor outreach program for youth projects (Konza Technopolis 2014), and technical training institutions to offer pre-employment skills to unemployed youth (Wanyoike 2014): pedagogical practices that pin the nation's developmentalist ideal to new modes of knowing and being.

On the other end of the spectrum are less grand entrepreneurial ambitions undertaken by a range of actors, from global corporations and international development institutions to the Kenyan state and nongovernmental organisations (NGOs), which seek to 'conduct the conduct' of (largely urban) idle youth, endowing them with an enterprising mindset that is driven as much from without as from within. The YEDF provides young people with entrepreneurship training to 'reengineer the thinking and tactic of business success' (YEDF 2016), and offers business development services and low-interest loans to start small- and medium-sized enterprises. As the chairman of the fund stated, 'Our people are the most important resource that we have, and it is on their shoulders that we place the achievement of our goals' (Osumba 2016). In contrast to the techno-utopia evoked by Konza City and the innovation hubs that now pervade Nairobi, here we find a more modest entrepreneurial vision; an incubator loan may assist a fledgling entrepreneur to start a poultry farm or buy a green house, while training offers a standard package of business skills, from writing a business plan to developing a record keeping system. Each of these enterprises reflects the government's ambition to convert youth into job creators (YEDF 2016), where youth's newly-acquired business skills will facilitate the transition from 'necessity' to 'opportunity' entrepreneurs, allowing them to forsake hawking, trading and hustling to pursue livelihoods as 'professional' entrepreneurs who get ahead instead of getting by. This distinction underpins a wide swath of entrepreneurial programming launched by the Kenyan government and a host of corporates, NGOs and social enterprises, which seek to convert the perceived habitus of informal workers, constructed through precarious and often illicit pursuits, into responsible, optimistic, value creators. As Balloon Ventures, an NGO funded by UK Aid that specialises in incubating entrepreneurialism in Kenya, writes:

> At Balloon, we're trying to get people to think differently about entrepreneurship. When people think of an entrepreneur, we don't want people just to think of Elon Musk, Jeff Bezons and Donald Trump (!). We want people to think about Bernard, who's a street Hawker; Anita who's a Dressmaker, Claudia who's a fashion designer and Mildred, who owns a hair salon (Balloon Ventures 2019a).

For Balloon Ventures, the survivalist, necessity entrepreneurs of Africa's informal economies are 'superstars' in waiting, 'with the potential to grow big businesses if supported properly' (Balloon Ventures 2019b). Bilateral donors such as USAID, social enterprises like Livelyhoods and corporations from Coca-Cola to Vodafone, now celebrate the transformations of youth in Nairobi's informal settlements, marking their transition from aimless and 'underproductive' citizens to 'responsible members of society' through business and vocational skills training, mentorship, and financial support (USAID 2015). Yet despite the support conferred, and the ubiquitous emphasis on the creation of an business-enabling environment, entrepreneurial success is tethered to an individual's capacity to embody and enact paradigmatic entrepreneurial qualities — drive, creativity, flexibility (Dolan and Rajak 2016). Describing this unambiguously individualised vision of progress, the World Economic Forum (WEF) writes:

> The heart of entrepreneurship in developing economies rests squarely on the entrepreneurs themselves – those who bring vision, determination, passion, courage, resilience, the willingness to take risks, to adapt and innovate, to risk failure, and the ability to pick themselves up each time (WEF 2016).

WEF is not unique in its celebration of individual agency as the zeitgeist of entrepreneurial capitalism. However, the emphasis on individual action and performance eclipses how contemporary entrepreneurial schemes bank on the social capital of entrepreneurs to realize business objectives. Indeed, in contrast to the 1950s and 1970s, where custom, kin and culture were seen to thwart the flourishing of an entrepreneurial subject, models of entrepreneurship such as route to market programmes that sell products to those living 'off the grid' of contemporary retail, capitalize on the social networks of the poor, using them as infrastructure for distribution and sales (Dolan and Rajak 2016), and thereby encouraging the entrepreneurialisation of all aspect of life (Foucault 2008).[22]

Nonetheless, efforts to elevate individuals as responsible economic agents reflect a longer legacy of shaping African workers for economic gain. Contemporary entrepreneurial projects, for example, often pivot on new temporal structures that seek to govern entrepreneurs' economic undertakings within the parameters of market time, while promoting a temporal conversion from the here-and-now of survival to goal-oriented, future thinking. As Dolan and Rajak's ethnography of Catalyst (ibid.), a social enterprise that offers un- and under-employed youth jobs as entrepreneurs selling 'life-improving' products in Nairobi's slums details, the organisation deploys diktats on time efficiency and punctuality to produce entrepreneurial dispositions purged of the vernacular timescape of 'unproductive' African time. At the same time, Catalyst continually emphasizes a distinction between the precariousness of the present and better things to come, claiming that sacrifice and determination in the here-and-now will unleash myriad rewards in the future (ibid.). Indeed, learning to be a goal-oriented, future-driven individual is presented as a virtue in itself, with 'notions of progress and betterment embedded' in capacity to plan, imagine and anticipate possibilities (Abram and Weszkalnys 2011: 14).

Mirroring earlier eras, where the refashioning of labour was seen as the path to economic stability, contemporary entrepreneurial discourse and practice correlate the development of an entrepreneurial subjectivity with broader prospects of national development (see also Honeyman [2016]). Bawisa (2017), for example, who advocates for a national entrepreneurship policy, promotes the importance of developing a new national mindset: 'An entrepreneurship policy would motivate school children to answer differently the question... what do you want to be when you grow up? Rather than say, 'I want to be a doctor' they would say, 'I want to own a hospital' (ibid.). Instead of performing essential work for the wellbeing of the population, it is the maxim of 'being your own boss', premised on an ethic of individual self-maximisation, which is the valued currency in the new enterprise economy. Yet while reflecting neoliberal imaginaries of an enterprise culture that will 'prepare youth to pursue livelihoods not in industry but in the free market'

(Rajak and Dolan, unpublished), the labouring subject of the post millennium moment revivifies qualities—industriousness, diligence, foresight—of the idealised agent of capitalism, a figure whose continual reformation has been deeply implicated in power relations. Indeed the neoliberal discourse of flexibility, self-maximisation and resilience, though clothed in language of choice and freedom, merely shifts the locus of power from the state to the market, supplanting the disciplinary techniques enacted by the colonial regime with the insecurity, fragility and contingency of an uncertain and risk-laden entrepreneurial future.

Conclusion

This paper has sketched a genealogy of the labouring subject in Kenya, from colonial plantations and factories to post-millennial entrepreneurs, describing the policies, practices and ideological work undertaken to mould African workers into productive economic agents. While the relationship between the exercise of power and the constitution of the labouring subject differed across colonial and post-colonial periods, from the disciplinary technologies of the colonial state to the neoliberal emphasis on self-reliance, there was a shared interest in curating a new economic subject with the qualities—productivity, efficiency, drive, future orientation, etc.—found lacking in the perceived torpor of the African habitus. Throughout the colonial era, for example, the spectre of 'productivity' loomed large, underpinning a range of efforts to reform the social and embodied dispositions of African labour deemed anathema to industrialisation. Colonial authorities sought to activate the African body as a means of production, purging a culture of 'idleness' and vice through the virtue of work. Through training and tutelage the 'idle'

African male was remade as a productive and efficient proletarian, pressed into service to capitalism and slotted into a work process that demanded routinised and regimented forms of labour to fuel the settler economy. Following independence, the process of subjectification extended from the wage worker on plantations and in factories, to a new model of *homo oeconomicus:* the 'modern' entrepreneur, invoked as an instrument of broad-based development, whose can-do attitude and willingness to assume risks was framed as a route to prosperity and social progress. Possessing entrepreneurial virtues in spades, the new generation of African entrepreneurs embodied the antithesis of the much-maligned African mode of business, their vision and acumen spearheading regional enterprise networks and investment opportunities. Importantly, while the emergence of the neoliberal, 'modern' entrepreneur marked a shift in the way in which African labour was defined and constituted as subjects, from disciplined wage workers to self-responsibilised entrepreneurial citizens, the latter was no less whetted and shaped as an object of policy. By the 1990s, for example, the Kenyan state, had succumbed to the entrepreneurial ethos, promoting self-employment and entrepreneurship education as an important part of economic development strategy. And, at the turn of the millennium, rebooting youth through entrepreneurial training resurfaced as key to the nation's strategy for economic growth, and various forms of entrepreneurship, from door-to-door sales to digital entrepreneurship, were championed as testament to 'Africa Rising' (The Economist 2011). Though the idealized labourer of these different periods came into form through disparate methods of control, interventions and logics of governments and international development institutions, the qualities of the labouring subject remained a central object of social, political and economic concern (Rose 1998).

Yet when viewed over a longer historical perspective, we find that efforts to remake Kenya's economic man, whether the colonial wage labourer or the high tech millennial entrepreneur, reflected enduring anxieties about an incommensurability between 'western' and 'African' modes of thought, seen to retard the development of the nation. Ambitions for economic stability and growth, for example, demanded a retooling of African vernacular norms and practices, their aberrant and 'undisciplined' temporal consciousness, deemed incongruous with the temporal registers of capitalism. African bodies were required to synchronize with capital's rhythms, acquiescing to clock time in the industrial factory and complying with the temporal strictures of youth entrepreneurial schemes. Further, this linear conception of time, with its well-established orientation toward the future, imprinted expectation and anticipation into the labouring subject, entrepreneurial rationalities of discipline, determination and foresight delivering the market's unalloyed promise: a 'predictable futurity' (Muehlebach 2013: 297).

The cultivation of productive 'economic man' also encompassed on-going, and often contradictory tensions between an occidental concepts of the autonomous, individual self and nuclear family, and an 'African' social body. In the early colonial period, apprehensions orbited around the detached migrant labourer, whose isolation from kin, culture and community presented a threat of social unrest. Ensuring a 'productive' and compliant male body on the factory floor required the stability of a resident nuclear family. Similarly, the Kenyan government and international development organisations alike constructed culture and tradition as obstructing the success of the post-independence entrepreneur, for whom kin and community militated against investment and business growth. In contrast, at the turn of the millennium, when the autonomous enterprising self (du Gay 1996) became the leitmotif of Kenya's post-agrarian economy (Melnick 2018), affective ties and social networks were reconstituted as a productive asset in entrepreneurial success.

Finally, the power of the millennial entrepreneurial discourse, which resignifies 'generation jobless' as self-enterprising subjects, lies in a discursive flexibility that allows the Kenyan state and international development organisations to embrace and deploy seemingly opposing logics. Like early framings of African entrepreneurialism as innate (even indigenous), contemporary entrepreneurial programmes promote Nairobi's informal settlements as a reservoir of 'natural' entrepreneurs, whose market savvy need only be unleashed and directed toward more 'productive' market forms. Yet at the same time, there is an emphasis on 'producing' entrepreneurs (and entrepreneurialism) through training, disciplining and transformation, with novel partnerships emerging to produce market subjects that will spawn new avenues of job creation and economic renewal. The power of the entrepreneurial discourse thus resides in its ability to operate in both registers, framing entrepreneurship as both always already present and yet possible to create (Rajak and Dolan nd).

In each of these transformations we see how regimes of power, whether the colonial administration, post-independence state, or international development institutions, sought to direct the course of capitalism by shaping the nature of the relationship between the 'conduct of the individual person' and the broader sphere of economic and social relations (Rose and Miller 1992: 180). What this genealogy suggests, however, extends beyond the making of a productive cadre of economic men. Rather, the efficient and enterprising labourer has come to represent a set of ideas about the future of the nation, deeply entwined with moral valuations of Kenya’s citizenry and with circulating idioms of development and economic growth. What is perpetually reasserted and rewritten in this evolution are the concepts of enterprise and entrepreneurialism themselves, continually invoked as a response to the shifting economic and political dynamics of colonial and postcolonial eras, and invested with a perennial capacity to reinvigorate the nation.

Notes

[1] 'Entrepreneurship' is an ambiguous concept characterised by considerable discursive flexibility in the social science and management literature. Its elasticity allows it to accommodate a range of actors and models of economic action (wage labour, petty trade, small and medium-size enterprises, door-to-door selling, tech innovators etc.) across time and space.

[2] The trope of economic man (*Homo economicus*) can be (arguably) traced to John Stuart Mill (1967), whose turn to the neoclassical paradigm in the late 19th century replaced the Marxist view of economic value as a product of commodity production with a focus on the "the subjective calculations of individuals seeking to maximize their own utility" (Hahn and Hart 2011: 37). Within economics, the concept has since come to represent a universal subject whose actions are premised on economic rationality, calculation and self-interest. In contrast, Foucault, anchored *homo oeconomicus* in the transition from classical liberalism to the neo-liberal form. Whereas the former—the 18th century *homo oeconomicus*—was represented as "one of the two partners in the process of exchange", the latter is an "entrepreneur of himself, being for himself his own capital, being for himself his own producer, being for himself the source of [his] earnings" (Foucault 2008: 226).

[3] This paper is based on archival research conducted at the UK Public Records Office and the Kenya National Archives, and a range of secondary sources. Ethnographic research conducted on youth entrepreneurship in Kenya (2012-204) informed much of the discussion and analysis of millennial entrepreneurs.

[4] Bourdieu (1990) defines habitus as socially learned dispositions, skills and ways of acting: a set of rules by which we interpret the social world from our particular position within it and that predispose us towards certain ways of behaving, thinking and acting.

[5] This paper is concerned with how a discursive regime centered on the construction of the productive and enterprising 'economic man' has operated and been reproduced in Kenya, through engagement with myriad institutions and actors, and across time. It does not address the impact of this discourse on social reality. Though Kenyans have expressed agency in the face of discourses and practices thus entailed, this paper centers on the specific modalities through which "economic man" is conjured and the labourers it interpellates rather than how the discourse is interpreted or experienced.

[6] Throughout the colonial and early post-independence periods, economic development policies were focused largely on the African man. Women's development, through education and craft production, was couched in terms of their reproductive role as mothers and wives (Hood 1997).

[7] Though the model of the productive economic man remains constant across time, how this idealised figure relates to wider social and communal relations shifts according to the broader policy and political economic environment, in which social relations vacillate between being an asset and constraint on economic development.

[8] The term 'native' is employed to reflect the nomenclature of the colonial state. The term 'Africans' represents indigenous inhabitants of Kenya.

[9] The threat African production posed to the profitability of the settler farming community underpinned the establishment of native reserves, which aimed to force Africans 'out of the produce market and into the labor market' (Austin 2016: 318).

[10] Foucault argued that pastoral power, originating in the Christian East, formed a foundation for forms of state-based governmentality. Exercised by a pastor over his flock, pastoral power held as its purpose the ultimate goal of individual salvation. In the 'modern' state, salvation is focused on this life rather than on the hereafter in the form of health, well-being, and security, etc. (Foucault 1982).

[11] The conditions under which Africans, particularly youth, laboured provoked heated criticism in Britain over a decade earlier, when the Colonial Office was accused of failing to honor their international obligations (Ocobock 2017).

[12] This assumption was challenged by Arthur Lewis (1955:103), whose work on African economic development concluded that Africans were 'as materialistic and acquisitive as other peoples.'

[13] The report of the commission, published in 1955 was dubbed 'Adam Smith Goes to Africa', reflecting a market-based perspective on economic development founded on privatisation and individualism (Hunter 2015).

[14] As part of its strategy for economic indigenisation, the state issued trade licenses and works permits (Komollo 2010).

[15] See Betanav (2019) for a discussion of how the concept of the informal sector was part of a wider history of ILO attempts to identify a measure of un- and under-employment in 'least developed' countries.

[16] Schumpeter theorised that the entrepreneur drove economic growth and development through a process of innovation and creative destruction (Schumpeter 1993).

[17] See Catherine Honeyman's (2016) ethnography of the Rwandan government's mandatory entrepreneurship curriculum for secondary schools.

[18] Youth aged 15–34 years form 35 percent of the population yet have the highest unemployment rate (67 percent) (Obonyo 2018).

[19] Women and youth are key targets of development through entrepreneurship, seen to deliver a triple win that is ‘good for development’, ‘good for business’, and ‘good for the poor.’

[20] The power of markets to quell the disaffection of youth may be over-stated. As the history of Mau Mau shows, the market could not accommodate all who wished to be landed producers, leaving the colonial state vulnerable to the agitation of disenfranchised farmers. I am grateful to the reviewer for this insight.

[21] In 2008, it became the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports (Hope 2017).

[22] See Huang (2018), Schuster (2015) and Freeman (2007) for how female entrepreneurs negotiate the tension between neoliberal discourses of the enterprising subject and ‘local’ gender norms of docility, social obligation and reputation.

References

Abram, Simone and Weszkalnys, Gisa. 2011. "Anthropologies of Planning, Temporality, Imagination, and Ethnography." *Focaal: Journal of Global and Historical Anthropology* 61: 3-18.

Austin, Gareth. 2016. "Sub-Saharan Africa." In *A History of the Global Economy from 1500 to the Present*, edited by J. Baten, 316-350. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Balloon Ventures. 2019a. "What is an Entrepreneur?", Balloon Ventures. Accessed March 27, 2019. https://balloonventures.com/uncategorized/what-is-an-entrepreneur-introducing-our-series-on-entrepreneurship-in-the-developing-world/

Balloon Ventures. 2019b. "What is the Informal Sector?", Balloon Ventures. Accessed March 27, 2019. https://balloonventures.com/uncategorized/what-is-the-informal-sector/.

Bangasser, Paul. 2000. *The ILO and the Informal Sector: An Institutional History*. Employment Paper 2000/9. Geneva: ILO.

Barder, Owen. 2005. *Reforming Development Assistance Lessons from the UK Experience*. London: Center for Global Development.

Bawisa, Henry. 2017. “Necessity of Entrepreneurship Policies.” *Standard Digital*, January 27, 2017. https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2001227339/necessity-of-entrepreneurship-policies.

Berkoff, B. 1974. “Foreword.” In *Promoting African Enterprise,* authored by Bruce Dinwiddy, vii. London: Overseas Development Institute.

Betanav, Aaron. 2019. “The Origins of Informality: The ILO at the Limit of the Concept of Unemployment.” *Journal of Global History* 14(1): 107-125.

Blanton, Kevin. 2000. "They Cannot Master Abstractions, but They Can Often Be Made Efficient Workers.” *Social Science Quarterly* 81(4): 1014-1026.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1990. *The Logic of Practice*. Cambridge, Polity.

Buell, Raymond. 1928. *The Native Problem in Africa,* vol. 1. New York: MacMillan.

Callaway, A. 1963. “Unemployment among African School Leavers.” *Journal of Modern African Studies* 1(3): 351-371.

Clayton, Anthony and Donald Savage. 1974. *Government and Labour in Kenya, 1895-1963*. London: Frank Cass.

Colonial Office. 1948. “Social Welfare in the Colonies.” Revised Memo. NA CO 859/519.

Cooper, Frederick. 1987. *On the African Waterfront: Urban Disorder and the Transformation of Work in Colonial Mombasa***.** New Haven: Yale University Press.

Cooper, Frederick. 1989. “From Free Labor to Family Allowances: Labor and African Society in Colonial Discourse.” *American Ethnologist* 16(4): 745–65.

Cooper, Frederick. 1992. “Colonizing Time: Work Rhythms and Labor Conflict in Colonial Mombasa.” In *Colonialism and Culture*, edited by Nicholas Dirks, 209-245, Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.

Cooper, Frederick. 1996. *Decolonization and African Society: The Labor Question in French and British Africa.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cooper, Frederick. 2002. *Africa Since 1940: The Past of the Present.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Correspondent. 2018. “Kenya Marks 10 Years of Vision 2030.” June 10. https://vision2030.go.ke/kenya-marks-10-years-of-vision-2030/.

Dahlstedt, Magnus and Fredrik Hertzberg. 2012. “Schooling Entrepreneurs: Entrepreneurship, Governmentality and Education Policy in Sweden at the Turn of the Millennium.” *Journal of Pedagogy* 3(2): 242 -262.

Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari. 1994. *What is Philosophy*? New York: Columbia University Press.

Desai, Gauray. 2001. *Subject to Colonialism: African Self-fashioning and the Colonial Library*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Dinwiddy, Bruce. 1974. *Promoting African Enterprise.* London: Overseas Development Institute.

Dolan, Catherine and Dinah Rajak. 2016. “Remaking Africa's Informal Economies: Youth, Entrepreneurship and the Promise of Inclusion at the Bottom of The Pyramid.” *Journal of Development Studies* 52(4): 514–29.

Dolan, Catherine and Dinah Rajak. 2018. “Speculative Futures at the Bottom of the Pyramid.” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 24(2): 233-255.

Du Gay, Paul. 1996. Consumption and Identity at Work. London: Sage.

The Economist. 2011. “The Hopeful Continent: Africa Rising.” December 3. https://www.economist.com/leaders/2011/12/03/africa-rising.

Fabian, Johannes. 1984. *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Ferrand, David. 1996. *A Study of the Missing Middle in Kenya*. Nairobi: Institute for Development Studies.

Foucault, Michel. 1982. “The Subject and Power.” *Critical Inquiry* 8(4): 777-795.

Foucault, Michel. 2002, *Power: Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984,* volume 3. London: Penguin Books.

Foucault, Michel. 2007. *Security, Territory, Population*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Foucault, Michel, 2008. *The Birth of Biopolitics; Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-79,* translated by Graham Burchell. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Foucault, Michel. 1991. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. London, Penguin

Freeman, Carla. 2007. “The ‘Reputation” of Neoliberalism.” *American Ethnologist* 34(2): 252–267.

Garlick, Peter. 1971. *African Traders and Economic Development in Ghana*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Goldman, Michael. 2004. *Imperial Nature*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004.

Hahn, Chris and Keith. 2011. *Economic Anthropology*. London: Polity Press.

Harbison, Frederick. 1967. “The Generation of Employment in Newly Developing Countries.” In *Education, Employment and Rural Development*, edited by James Sheffield. Nairobi: East African Publishing House.

Higgins, Abigail. 2013. “The Improvisers: Nairobi’s Youth Confront a Future with Few Formal Jobs.” *Next City* 4(69): 1-12.

Honeyman, Catherine. 2016. *The Orderly Entrepreneur: Youth, Education, and Governance in Rwanda*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Hope, Ronald. 2012. “Engaging the Youth in Kenya: Empowerment, Education, and Employment.” *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth* 17(4): 221-236.

Hoselitz, Bert. 1964. “The Development of African Entrepreneurs.” In *Economic Development in Africa*, edited by E.F. Jackson, 86–105. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

Howarth, David. 2002. “An Archaeology of Political Discourse? Evaluating Michel Foucault’s Explanation and Critique of Ideology.” *Political Studies* 50: 117–135.

Huang, Juli. 2017. “The Ambiguous Figures of Social Enterprise: Gendered Flexibility and Relational Work among the IAgents of Bangladesh.” *American Ethnologist* 44(4): 603-616.

Hunter, Emma. 2015. *Political Thought and the Public Sphere in Tanzania: Freedom, Democracy and Citizenship in the Era of Decolonization.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Inter-African Labour Institute (IALI). 1956. *The Human Factors of Productivity in Africa: A Preliminary Study*. London: CCTA.

International Labour Organization (ILO). 1972. *Employment, Incomes and Equity: A Strategy for Increasing Productive Employment in Kenya*. Geneva: ILO.

Johari, Amina. 2015. “Kenya’s Konza Techno City: Utopian Vision Meets Social Reality.” Independent Study Project (ISP) Collection, 2024. https://digitalcollections.sit.edu/isp_collection/2024.

Jones, William. 1960. "Economic Man in Africa," Food Research Institute Studies 1(2): 1-28.

Kalpagam, U. 2000. “Colonial Governmentality and the ‘Economy’”. *Economy and Society* 29(3): 418–438.

Kenya. 1954. Report on the Committee of African Wages. Nairobi: Government Printer.

Kibati, Mugo. 2013. “Open Letter to Kenyans by Vision 2030 Secretariat.” February 4. Accessed March 27 2019, https://bit.ly/2rld4Ek.

Komollo, F.O. 2010. “Regularization of the Informal ‘Jua Kali’ Activities in Nairobi for Sustainable Development.” Paper presented at the 46th ISOCARP Congress, September 19-23.

Konza Technopolis. 2014. “Abridged Strategic Plan 2020.” Accessed March 27 2019. http://www.konzacity.go.ke/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/KoTDAs-Strategic-Plan-2020-Abridged-Version.pdf.

Korir, Cheruiyot. 2017. “Government Train Youth on On-line Work.” Ministry of Information, Communication and Technology. Accessed March 27 2019. http://www.ict.go.ke/government-train-youth-on-on-line-work.

Legovini, Arianna. 2002. *Kenya: Macro Economic Evolution since Independence*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

Lewis, Arthur. 1955. "The Economic Development of Africa." In *Africa in the Modern World*, edited by C.W. Stillman, 97-112. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Lewis, Joanna. 2000. *Empire State Building: War and Welfare in Kenya 1925-52*. James Currey: Oxford.

Lind Holmes, SM. 1980. *Aspects of Land and Labour in Kenya, 1919-1939*. MA Thesis, University of Durban.

Marsden, Keith. 1990. African Entrepreneurs: Pioneers of *Development*. Washington DC: International Finance Corporation and the World Bank.

McDade, Barbara, and Anita Spring. 2005. "The 'New Generation of African Entrepreneurs': Networking to Change the Climate for Business and Private Sector-Led Development." *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development* 17(1): 17-42.

Melnick, Amiel. 2018. "Black Spots: Roads and Risk in Rural Kenya." PhD Dissertation, Columbia University.

Mill, J. S. 1967 (1836). *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill: Essays on Economics and Society*, edited by J. M. Robson. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Muehlebach, Andrea. 2013. "On Precariousness and the Ethical Imagination: The Year 2012 in Sociocultural Anthropology." *American Anthropologist* 115(2): 297-311.

Nanni, Giordano. 2012. *The Colonisation of Time*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Nelson, Robert, and Scott Johnson. 1997. "Entrepreneurship Education as a Strategic Approach to Economic Growth in Kenya." *Journal of Industrial Teacher Action* 25(1): 7-21.

Northcott, Clarence. 1949. *African Labour Efficiency Survey*. Colonial Office Research Publications, No. 3. London: H.M. Stationary Office.

Ocobock, Paul. 2017. *An Uncertain Age: The Politics of Manhood in Kenya.* Athens: Ohio University Press.

Obonyo, Raphael. 2018. "Youth Unemployment in Kenya." Info Brief, IB-01/18. Nairobi: Youth Congress.

O'Brien, F.S. and T.C.I Ryan. 1999. *Aid and Reform in Africa: Kenya Case Study*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

Official Gazette of the Colony and Protectorate of Kenya. 1921. "Government Notice 385." *Colonial Office Despatch Regarding Native Labor in Kenya Colony* 23(794): 924-925.

Ogot, Bethwell. 1974. *Zamani: A Survey of East African History*. Nairobi: E.A.P.H..

Okia, Opolet. 2012. *Communal Labor in Colonial Kenya: The Legitimization of Coercion, 1912-1930*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Orde-Browne, Granville. 1946. "Labour Conditions in East Africa." Colonial Document No. 193. London: HMSO.

Osumba, Ronald. 2016. "Remarks During the Launch of Website and 100 Days Rapid Results Initiative." 17 August. http://www.youthfund.go.ke/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/RRI_Speech.pdf.

Potts, Deborah. 2007. *The State and the Informal in Sub-Saharan African Urban Economies: Revisiting Debates on Dualism*. Crisis States Working Papers Series No. 2. London: LSE/DESTIN.

Rajak, Dinah and Catherine Dolan. nd. Aspiring Minds: 'A Generation of Entrepreneurs in the Making'. Unpublished paper.

Read, Jason. 2009. “A Genealogy of Homo-Economicus: Neoliberalism and the Production of Subjectivity.” *Foucault Studies* 6: 25-36.

Rose, Nikolas. 1998. *Inventing Our Selves: Psychology, Power and Personhood*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rose, Nikolas and Peter Miller. 1992. "Political Power Beyond the State: Problematics of Government.” *British Journal of Sociology* 43(2): 173-205.

Samuel Hall. 2017. *Youth Employment in Kenya*. Nairobi: Samuel Hall.

Sawai, K. 2002. “Why the IMF and World Bank Fail in Kenya.” *The East African*, March 15, https://www.globalpolicy.org/component/content/article/209/43361.html.

Schumpeter, Joseph. ([1934] 1993) *The Theory of Economic Development: An Inquiry into Profits, Capital, Credit, Interest and The Business Cycle.* Translated by Redvers Opie. London: Transaction Publishers.

Schuster, Caroline. 2015. *Social Collateral: Women and Microfinance in Paraguay's Smuggling Economy.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Smart, Devin. 2011. “Narrating Colonial Realities: Discourse, Difference and the East African Standard in Colonial Kenya, 1922-1954.” MA Thesis, Western Washington University.

Smith, A. 1976. (1776) An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of The Wealth of Nations, edited by R. H. Campbell, A. S. Skinner, and W. B. Todd. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Smith, David. 2012. “Kenya Building A Digital Future in Africa's Silicon Savannah.” *The Guardian*, October 30.

Spencer, Ian. 1974. “The Development of Production and Trade in the Reserve Areas of Kenya, 1895-1929.” PhD Dissertation, Simon Fraser University.

The Standard Digital. 2016. “Time to Deliver On Konza City's Strategic Plan.” Accessed March 27 2019. www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2000227380/time-to-deliver-on-konza-city-s-strategic-plan+&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=uk&client=safari.

Tiffen, Mary. 1976. *The Enterprising Peasant: Economic Development in Gombe Emirate North Eastern State, Nigeria 1900-1968.* Overseas Research Publications No. 21. London: H.M.S.O.

Throup, David. 1987. *Economic and Social Origins of Mau Mau*. London: James Currey.

USAID Kenya and East Africa. 2015. *Entrepreneurship*. July. Accessed March 28, 2019. https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1860/10.%20Entreprenurship.pdf.

Volker, Wild. 1997. *Profit not for Profit's Sake: History and Business Culture of African Entrepreneurs in Zimbabwe.* Harare: Baobab Books.

Wanyoike, James. 2014 "Smart Cities: Implications of Konza City." Accessed March 28 2019. http://centreforurbaninnovations.org/content/smart-cities-implications-konza-city.

Walmsley, R.W. 1957. *Nairobi: The Geography of a New* City. Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau.

Waris, Attiya. 2007. "Taxation without Principles: A Historical Analysis of the Kenyan Taxation System." *Kenyan Law Review* 1: 272-303.

Weber, Max. (1904 [2011) *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Translated by S. Kahlberg. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

White, Luise. 1990. "Separating the Men from the Boys: Constructions of Gender, Sexuality, and Terrorism in Central Kenya, 1939-1959." *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 23(1): 1-25.

World Bank. 1989. *Sub-Saharan Africa. From Crisis to Sustainable Growth*. Washington DC: World Bank.

World Economic Forum (WEF). 2016. “This is What Entrepreneurs Need to Thrive.” Accessed February 22. https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/09/this-is-what-entrepreneurs-need-to-thrive/.

Youth Enterprise Development Fund (YEDF). 2016. *Enterprise Development Programs Guide*. Nairobi: Youth Enterprise Development Fund.

Zelaza, Tiyambe. 1992. “The Colonial Labour System in Kenya.” In *An Economic History of Kenya*, edited by William Ochieng and Robert Maxon, 171-200. Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers Ltd.